



PRESS RELEASE

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PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE THE FIRST DEATH FROM WEST NILE VIRUS IN LONG BEACH

LONG BEACH - West Nile Virus (WNV) claimed the life of an 88-year old Long Beach woman, making her the first to die in the City of Long Beach from the virus, reported Darryl M. Sexton, MD, City Health Officer. The woman was hospitalized on July 28th and died on August 9th from the illness. City Public Health officials again emphasize that though the overall risk of contracting WNV infection with serious illness may be low in the general population, for the elderly and immune-suppressed individuals the risk is much greater. To date, the State of California Department of Health Services has reported 109 human cases of WNV infection and four deaths from the virus.

On June 23rd, in order to be more aggressive in its need to identify the mosquito-borne virus early, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) increased the state requirement of public health reporting by physicians and laboratories by making medical conditions of the WNV reportable to local health authorities, thus enabling them to have an earlier warning of increased mosquito activity. Further, the City of Long Beach continues to coordinate citywide mosquito surveillance and abatement with the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District and the Compton Creek Mosquito Abatement District. The DHHS also continues to promote active WNV prevention education to the public.

City of Long Beach Public Health Officials are continuing to take precautions to prevent the spread of infection in the City and urge residents and business owners to decrease their risk of WNV by reducing mosquito breeding sources. They urge residents to take the following precautions:

- Remove pools of standing or stagnant water, which provide a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Debris piles, buckets, barrels, kids' toys, and tire swings are some common sources of stagnant water. Mosquitoes need water to complete their life cycle, therefore they are most active around stagnant water;
- Clear gutters and drains of standing water;
- Change water in birdbaths frequently;
- Maintain swimming pools and spas with proper filtration and chlorination levels. Green or dirty pools can breed thousands of mosquitoes in a week's time, unnecessarily increasing the population's risk of contracting WNV;

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- Limit the watering of lawns and outdoor plants to twice a week to avoid run off to gutters and around sprinklers;
- Limit your time outdoors when you notice mosquito activity (primarily at dusk and dawn). If you remain outdoors while mosquitoes are biting, wear clothing that provides more coverage of your skin (such as long sleeved shirts and pants);
- Use mosquito repellents containing 10-30% DEET when outdoors and especially between dusk and dawn. The repellent should be sprayed on clothing and exposed skin. Residents should follow instructions on the label. Consult with your child's pediatrician for appropriate concentrations to be used on children under the age of two;
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens and are in good repair.

Mosquito monitoring and abatement are key goals of the DHHS' Vector Control Program. Long Beach coordinates citywide mosquito surveillance and abatement in conjunction with the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District and the Compton Creek Mosquito Abatement District. These programs monitor and control mosquito breeding in public areas by setting mosquito traps in breeding areas, and by mitigating mosquito populations by spraying for mosquitoes with larvicides and adulticides in public areas with stagnant water such as wetlands, streets, curbsides, pump stations, and abandoned swimming pools. The DHHS also treats flood control channels and storm water runoff systems.

American crows and other birds are susceptible to WNV infection, and may be carriers of the virus, which can infect mosquitoes. The DHHS is requesting residents to cooperate by reporting dead birds which appear recently dead, have no injuries and have no evidence of predator trauma by calling **1-877-WNV-BIRD**. Because of State of California Department of Health Services (DHS) policy, if authorities do not pick up the bird within 24 hours, residents are being advised to dispose of the bird remains. The public should not handle dead birds with their bare hands. If individuals must remove a dead bird, use a shovel, cardboard or plastic bag to handle the bird, and place it in a plastic trash bag for disposal.

If you have any questions regarding mosquito control and monitoring measures in the City of Long Beach, please feel free to **contact the DHHS' Vector Control Program at (562) 570-4132** or go to the DHHS' website at www.longbeach.gov/health.

To report standing curbside water that has been present for longer than two days, please call **the Vector Control Program or the City of Long Beach Public Works Department at (562) 570-2700**.

Further information about the WNV may be obtained at the State of California Department of Health Services website at www.westnile.ca.gov, or at the Federal www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile.

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